Commonwealth Edison Company, Crawford Electric Generating Plant
Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor
3501 South Pulaski Road at the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-114

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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HAER No. IL-114

Location:	I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor 3501 South Pulaski Road along the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal Chicago, Cook County, Illinois UTM: 16 E.439950 N.4630730 Quad: Englewood
Date of Construction:	1924
Architect:	Graham, Anderson, Probst and White
Present Owner:	Commonwealth Edison Company
Present Use:	Electrical Power Generation
Significance:	The buildings of the Crawford Electric Generating Station were designed by the renowned architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White; the Crawford Station also reflects the rapid expansion in the the 1920s of Chicago's largest electric utility, the Commonwealth Edison Company.
Project Information:	The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked on an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100 mile-long corridor. Field work for this project was concluded in 1988. Final editing of the documentation was completed in 1992.
Historians:	Gray Fitzsimons, Frances Alexander, and John Nicolay, 1986; Carolyn Brucken, 1992.

The Crawford Avenue Electric Generating Station was built in 1924, the year after the Commonwealth Edison Company witnessed its largest annual increase in customers. The Crawford Station was designed by the prominent Chicago architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. The station is one of the largest within the company's system; the plant generates approximately five percent of the total Commonwealth Edison output in Chicago. The powerhouse has two operating steam-turbine units with a capacity of 234 megawatts. The adjacent boilers burn high grade western coal. The Crawford Station and the Fisk Street Station are the last two major steam plants operating in Chicago. (The Ridgeland Avenue Electric Generating Station, built in the early 1950s, is an oil burning plant located just south of the Metropolitan Sanitary District. This plant is currently being demolished by the Florida Stone Company.)

The largest structure at this seventy-two-acre site is the powerhouse and boiler building. Six stories tall and measuring 455′ x 363′, this building has a steel-frame structure and reinforced concrete with pilaster construction. The exterior walls are of common-bond, brick construction and the interior walls are finished in glazed, decorative white tile. The exterior columns are encased in brick with arched windows between each bay. The building features a series of decorative motifs designed in an eclectic Gothic style. The 34.5 kv transmission towers are of reinforced concrete construction.

To the south of the powerhouse is the Switch House and Administration Building. The Administration Building has a large, projecting main entrance framed by pilasters and with a pedimented gable above the door. The building is a brick and concrete structure, measuring 80′ x 30′, with a gable roof. The original Administration Building, a one-story structure located at the main entrance to the plant, is currently being used as an employee lounge; it is scheduled for demolition to provide additional parking space.

To the east, the Synchronous Condenser House, constructed in 1939, has a steel frame, brick walls, and a reinforced concrete foundation. This two-and-one-half story building measures 50′ x 13′; a small one-and-one-half-story wing is attached. The building is lightly ornamented with a double belt-course of concrete above the windows. Originally the building was used to repair electric trains; currently, the building is no longer used.

The Inlet Channel, Pumping Station, and Water Treatment Plant (located south of the powerhouse) are used to draw water from the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Several other small brick and block buildings are nearby. A concrete-block shed containing a winch used for docking coal barges stands along the slip. In addition, a five-story coal crusher and inclined conveyor stands near the slip. The building has a steel frame with corrugated metal cladding. A one-story Guardhouse, measuring 20′ x 30′ and constructed of brick, stands at the entrance to the site. This building also contains decorative motifs of terra cotta.

Since the 1940s there have been numerous alterations to the site. Majors additions include a steel-frame, coal-barge, unloading crane; conical-shaped, experimental garbage incineration structures; and emission control equipment mounted on top the Boiler Building.

SOURCES:

Crawford Station Archives, (available at Crawford Avenue Station, Chicago Illinois).

"Crawford Station: One of the Great Electric Generating Plants that Serve Chicago," Commonwealth Edison Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1948 (unpublished).

"General Plan of Buildings and Property, Crawford-Station 13," Commonwealth Edison Company, Chicago, Illinois, June 13, 1965, (Drawing CR-21).